

## **A New Organ for Saint Joan's.**

**A New Organ for Saint Joan's ?** was the subject of a Special Parish Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> February this year. It was the culmination of more than three years research to find the best solution to our organ needs. After a presentation, questions and discussions, parishioners were invited to consider three options:

1. For the parish to go for a Henry Willis2 pipe organ at a cost of approximately £55,000.
2. For the parish to opt for another electronic organ, equivalent to the one we have at present costing approximately £35,000 or
3. To do nothing and soldier on with the instrument we have at present – a 37 year old Allen electronic organ, which has served the parish extremely well but has now become unreliable and erratic. This Allen organ was generously donated by a parishioner, Aubrey Carroll and our immense gratitude has not diminished over the 37 years of its lifetime.

The Special Parish Meeting, well publicised beforehand, was attended by about 40 parishioners who voted by a large majority (and it was a vote by secret ballot), to go for the Henry Willis2 organ.

**There are many redundant pipe organs** looking for a home but most are in poor condition and would need a vast sum of money to restore. Good redundant organs are not easily found and when they are found they are spoken for quickly and often whisked off to France or Germany or, more commonly now, to Eastern Europe to be rebuilt in churches vandalised under Communism.

**We were fortunate then** to be told, through a friend, of a Henry Willis2 organ in a redundant church in Aberdeen. It was not wanted by Aberdeen University who had taken over the building and would be given to Henry Willis & Sons for disposal.

**Travelling to Aberdeen** with Neil Wright, the organist at Farnborough Abbey, an internationally acclaimed recitalist and one of our advisors, we met with David Wyld, the Managing Director of Henry Willis & Sons. In the redundant building, we found an unusually fine organ, originating from a time (1906), when the Willis company built some of its most prized instruments. It was in superb condition - having been looked after by the Willis company for many years. The organ is unaltered (rare for an instrument of this age) and with original tracker action. It underwent a major overhaul nine years ago – the kind of overhaul pipe organs need every 30/40years.

**Good pipe organs don't wear out.** There are many across Europe 100,2,3,even some 400years old and providing exquisite sound for audiences

and congregations. This Henry Willis<sup>2</sup> organ, when built and for its size, was the most expensive organ money could buy. David Wyld, the Managing Director of Henry Willis and Sons, assures us that in 100 years time this organ will be the same magnificent instrument it is today.

**The pipe organ is an instrument unequalled in historical significance** and its capacity to enhance and enrich liturgy. There is no doubt it has a unique sound. It is of course the original organ – electronic organs imitate its sound – some better than others. Since the seventeenth century composers and musicians have used the organ to give life to their inspirations and thoughts. Central to the lives of great composers including the Bach family, Mozart and Handel, it has enabled worshippers, musicians and composers to express themselves in prayer and worship. Not without good reason has the organ been called the **King of Instruments**.

**This magnificent Henry Willis<sup>2</sup> organ** will not only serve our weekly liturgical needs uniquely, it will provide what is best for weddings (17 this year), funerals, baptisms and other big occasions. Our aim is for it to attract young and aspiring organists. It will enable us to promote public performances by visiting recitalists and it will provide a legacy for future generations of parishioners and Farnham people.